

How to prepare for Polity?

The second and third paper of civil services is the most difficult in the main examination of civil services. The second paper is especially tough and it is related to the Constitution. As an example of how difficult this paper is we can see the score of 2015 topper Tina Dabi. She took political science during her graduation and this was her optional subject. You know that this paper on polity is directly related to political science. It is important to note that while she got only 84 out of 250 in the second paper of general studies, she scored over 60% in the optional paper. Now you can understand that a student who has studied political science as an optional paper is scoring around 33% in general studies. Then what is the reason for it? To clear your doubt, let me tell you that it wasn't that students that year scored very little in this paper. Jasmeet Singh Sindhu who stood third in the examinations had scored a 100 in this paper.

What I'm trying to tell you is that it is not that one cannot score well in this paper. It just means that it requires a different kind of preparation. It means that if we only have bookish knowledge of the subject then it will be very difficult for us to score well in this paper. I'm keeping this fact in mind and writing this for you in the hope that you will be able to prepare for quality and score well.

Why challenging?

There is a very clear reason for why this paper is so challenging and you need to know what it is so you can face it. The first challenge is that the syllabus is more vast compared with other subjects. The syllabus is divided into five parts: administration, constitution, political process, justice and international relations. To be honest, the challenge is not that it has five parts but that the syllabus of at least three parts is not very clear. These three are administration, quality and justice. The second biggest challenge is this. When the syllabus is not decided, then of course it creates a big dilemma for you: What are the topics you should prepare? The third biggest challenge is that the syllabus can be called the practical aspect of the constitution and administration. The difficult bit is that you do not have any practical knowledge of administration or the administrative process.

You know only a little bit about justice. So it is difficult to give accurate answers. The fourth challenge comes when you are writing down your answer and you are asked for solutions to the problems. If you think about it, how will you answer questions which you have no practical knowledge about?

The fifth challenge is related to current affairs. The entire preparation of polity is possible only through reading newspapers and following news. The syllabus is not clear and you know that newspapers are full of news items. This could lead to confusion about which topics to study and which to leave. The next challenge is related to the questions on international relations. But these are common in nature and if you are aware of contemporary happenings in the world it will be easy for you to answer them. The good news is that the syllabus is quite clear and the questions are not difficult. You can even write a 200-word answer to put forth your opinion. You may think of these problems as common but practically they are not so. The strategy that can help you overcome these problems is to leave the world of books and step into the practical world.

When I refer to society here, I mean the political and administrative setup and justice. If you are thinking of studying as many books as possible and scoring as much as possible, you are not thinking right. I have come to the conclusion that Tina Dabi Could not score very well in this paper because she was focused on books during her preparation. Perhaps, she knew more than required when it comes to general studies. The problem here is that she could not convert special knowledge on the subject to common knowledge This happened because she was not aware of the practical aspects of the subject.

Study material

Friends, when it comes to preparing for polity do not try to read as many books as possible. NCERT books for class 9 to 12 and the book by M. Laxmikant will suffice. It is true that your success will depend on how well you are able to use the books. I would like to divide the preparation of this paper into two parts. The first part is based on its principles and the second is based on its practical aspect which I have referred to as the

relation to society. Until you are able to assimilate both, your preparation won't be complete. When I'm talking about preparation here I mean pre and mains both. You know that at least 20% of the questions asked in prelims are based on quality and they are mostly related to the constitution. This is the part of the paper related to its theories and ignoring it during the prelims would be a big risk. I know you do not want to take this risk. If you are not aware of theoretical aspects of the subject then you will not be able to understand its practical aspects or give your opinion on it.

You can judge what I am saying by the fact that politics is a subject that is debated among people on streets and even those in the Parliament. This means that common people also know this subject. But they are not aware of the theoretical aspects of this paper. This means that one can talk about this subject without knowing its theories, but they will not be able to add weight to what they are saying. So you would have to maintain a balance between these two aspects. When it comes to practical knowledge about the subject the best way for that is reading the newspaper. You do not have to read many newspapers. You just need to read one national newspaper and it should be enough.

I would like to give you some information for your convenience. You can even visit afeias.com where you will get important clippings from daily national newspapers in Hindi and English both. I think this is a treasure trove for you. You can get all the news from your newspaper and read editorial comments and articles on this website. This would be enough for you.

How to prepare

Now let's talk about practical steps that you could take to do justice to the study material. I will break down what I'm saying into several points so that you can understand them better.

1) You should start your preparation with NCERT books. Understand all the chapters in them. Just assume that you do not know what is the constitution, the government or a politician. What is the definition of equality, independence and justice? How does a democracy function? These books contain these topics in great detail and explain them at a practical level. You have to understand them with all sincerity. If you lack here then even if you know the entire constitution you will not be able to write a good answer.

2) After this you read the books by M Laxmikant and understand the constitution. Add to this whatever you have learnt from the NCERT book. This may be difficult initially but will get easier.

3) Once you're done with all this preparation read editorial comments in newspapers on polity but see them not just in the backdrop of the constitution but also try to understand and figure out what are the constitutional provisions for it.

4) Listen carefully to interviews and debates on important topics on radio or Doordarshan. This will improve your ability to understand and think.

5) Think about important developments. Once you are in the advanced stage of your preparation, start writing on them.

6) A year before you decide to sit for the exam, You should become serious about preparing for the subject. I mean serious in the sense that you should choose important topics on the lines of the exam. Take help of unsolved papers for this. The topics that you think are important, note them down in a register. Now, whenever you hear important facts, incidents, thoughts, figures and constitutional provisions about the topic note them down as well.

Friends, obviously this will take time. But this kind of preparation will be solid and put you in the category of a high-scorer. Do not forget that you will reap the gains even during the interview because many questions asked during an interview are on politics, especially those related to current affairs. The initial preparation can be completed in six months. After that you can devote time to strengthen it with daily newspaper reading. This would ensure your preparation is strong.